

Message Text

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64
ACTION EUR-12

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R 051530Z NOV 74
FM AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 916
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AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT EWWT FR
SUBJECT: DEFFERRE NAMED PRESIDENT OF COMMITTEE FOR DEFENSE OF
FRENCH MERCHANT MARINE

1 GASTON DEFFERRE, DEPUTE-MAIRE OF MARSEILLE CALLED PRESS
CONFERENCE AT MAIRIE NOVEMBER 4 TO ANNOUNCE FORMATION OF NATIONAL
COMMITTEE FOR DEFENSE OF MERCHANT MARINE UNDER HIS PRESIDENCY.
COMMITTEE WITH BRANCHES IN BORDEAUX, LE HAVRE AND DUNKIRK WILL
BE HEADQUARTERED "FOR TIME BEING" AT MAIRIE OF MARSEILLE.
SOCIALIST, RADICAL, COMMUNIST POLITICAL AND LABOR LEADERS
PARTICIPATED, SECONDED DEFFERRE'S EFFORT TO "AWAKEN PUBLIC
OPINION TO DISQUIETING DEGRADATION" OF FRENCH MERCHANT FLEET.
SPEAKING WITH ADDED AUTHORITY AS FORMER MINISTER OF MERCHANT
MARINE, GASTON DEFFERRE CITED DECLINE OF FRENCH SHIPPING CAPABILITY,
SAID 60 PER CENT OF FRANCE'S MARITIME TRAFFIC NOW CARRIED BY
FOREIGN FLAG VESSELS AND THAT 302 SHIPS AND JOBS OF 20,000
OFFICERS AND CREWMEN HAD DISAPPEARED IN LAST TWENTY YEARS.
HE SAID FRANCE HAD ALLOWED FOREIGN COMPANIES TO TAKE ITS PLACE
IN FORMER COLONIES AND THAT TRADITIONAL SHIPPING ESTABLISHMENTS
HAD BEEN REPLACED BY FINANCIAL GROUPS INTERESTED ONLY IN QUICK
PROFIT. HE CALLED ON GOVT TO
PUSH USE OF MERCHANT MARINE, ESTABLISH "DYNAMIC AND COHERENT
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POLICY OF MARITIME TOURISM" AND QUALIFIED STATUS OF LINER

"FRANCE" AS "UNACCEPTABLE".

DEFFERRE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT HIGH TONNAGE FIGURES OFTEN CITED FOR MARSEILLE PORT WERE DUE SPECIFICALLY TO PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS SHIPMENTS - NOT NORMAL PORT TRAFFIC. HE STATED TRAFFIC HAD NOT INCREASED SINCE 1913.

2. CONSERVATIVE DAILY "LE MERIDIONAL" OF NOVEMBER 5 SAID PARTICIPANTS IN COMMITTEE WERE SAME WHO BACKED DECOLONIZATION AND THAT PRESENT CRISIS SIMPLY FALLOUT FROM THIS POLICY. FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL BLOCK NOTES PRESENCE OF EDUCATION AND AGRICULTURAL UNIONS AT PRESS CONFERENCE AND, WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK, SUGGEST THAT ONLY ORGANIZATION MISSING WAS "AMICALE DES COCUS" (CUCKOLDS) FOR "AS PAGNOL'S CESAR REMARKED, "ONE FINDS THEM MOSTLY IN THE MARINE".

COMMENT: CONSIDERABLE SURPRISE HERE THAT DEFFERRE SHOULD THROW COLD WATER ON FIGURES OFTEN USED TO UNDERLINE IMPORTANCE OF OVERALL PORT TRAFFIC. WHILE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND PORT AUTHORITIES SPEAK OF "REBIRTH" OF PORT FOLLOWING OPENING SUEZ CANAL, MOST LABOR LEADERS AND SOME INDUSTRIALISTS FEEL NOT ENOUGH BEING DONE TO PREPARE FOR HANDLING INCREASED TRAFFIC. NEW COMMITTEE, GROUPING LEFT WING LABOR AND POLITICAL LEADERS, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY GIVE DEFFERRE LEVERAGE IN NATIONAL DEBATE ON FUTURE OF FRENCH MERCHANT MARINE. IT PUTS HIM IN PARTICULARLY STRONG POSITION HERE AS DECLINE IN SHIPPING, CREW LAYOFFS EFFECT MARSEILLAIS EMOTIONALLY AS WELL AS FINANCIALLY.

SIMPSON

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